

San Antonio – Earlier today, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia released [a unanimous opinion](#) denying preclearance to S.B. 14, the voter photo identification law passed by the State of Texas in 2011. Rep. Charles A. Gonzalez (TX-20), the Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Elections, released the following statement.

“Today, three federal judges confirmed what I and many others have said since the voter photo identification law was first passed: the Texas legislature passed an illegal law that would take our state backwards. The court today agreed that the law imposes ‘an implicit fee for the privilege of casting a ballot’, what my colleague John Lewis has called [‘poll taxes by another name.’](#)

“The judges noted that one third of Texas counties lack offices where people could secure an acceptable identification card and, ‘a 200 to 250 mile round trip—especially for would-be voters having no driver’s license—constitutes a “substantial burden” on the right to vote.’ Even those who could make it would find ‘none of Texas’s DPS offices are open on weekends or past 6:00 PM, eliminating for many working people the option of obtaining an EIC on their own time [and] forces poorer citizens to choose between their wages and their franchise unquestionably denies or abridges their right to vote.’ They did not note, but everyone should know, that the Texas legislature took no steps to lessen this burden.

“Today’s opinion was crystal clear that the voter photo identification law, if enacted, would deny Texas citizens the right to elect the representatives of their choice, the very foundation of our nation and our democracy. During the trial, Texas complained about the challenges it faced in trying to argue its case, which may explain why so many arguments opposing the photo identification law went unanswered, but the court wrote, ‘if counsel faced an “impossible burden,” it was because of the law Texas enacted—nothing more, nothing less.’

“Voting is the most fundamental right of every American citizen, the foundation on which our entire system of government and our freedom to live as Americans is based. Today, the federal court stood up for that vital right. The Department of Justice and the federal judiciary defended democracy itself.”

Congressman Gonzalez has long opposed the introduction of voter photo identification laws like S.B. 14, against which he [drafted a letter](#) in January, 2011, [testifying](#) before the Senate

Committee on the Judiciary's
[Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights](#)
in September, 2011, and chairing
[a congressional forum on voting rights](#)
in Houston, TX, in July, 2012.